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LANSA — Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia

National Policy Documents Cite LANSA Products

FAO, a key LANSA stakeholder in Bangladesh champions importance of agriculture in combating malnutrition

Context

Every year Bangladesh produces a Monitoring Report of its National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. For the last 3 years (2015, 2016, 2017) this document has made direct reference to LANSA research on determinants of child undernutrition and on the importance of agriculture in addressing undernutrition. The report to monitor the Country Investment Plan (CIP 2011) is developed by the Ministry of Food's Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) and 17 partner ministries with technical assistance from Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH) Programme being implemented by FAO with support from USAID and EU. FAO in Bangladesh focuses on supporting policy development on food and nutrition security with a focus on nutrition sensitive food systems and has become a key champion for LANSA research.

Country Investment Plan Monitoring Reports

In 2011 the Government adopted the Country Investment Plan (CIP) to support implementation of the National Food Policy (NFP) and its Plan of Action (PoA). CIP 2011 - a road map towards investment in agriculture, food security and nutrition, is a results based tool aimed to improve food security in a comprehensive manner.

> *Implementing policies are more than planning strategies and setting up guidelines – a policy also has to be monitored to identify scalable programmes and to measure the outcomes of success against the results framework. LANSA's approach of using agriculture for nutrition has strategic importance in the broader spectrum of improving nutrition and initiatives like this come up as an important story to tell. The evidence generated and lessons learned from LANSA studies add to the aggregate progress that is being measured. "*

» Dr. Lalita Bhattacharjee, Senior Nutritionist, FAO

The CIP is anchored in the existing national policy and planning frameworks and builds on past and on-going operations in support of food security, and also reflects the diverse views of its many stakeholders as a result of a unique and inclusive consultation process, involving government agencies, academics, civil society, private sector, NGOs, UN agencies and development partners. The Monitoring Report for the CIP 2011, assesses achievements and reports on progress made in the plan period towards the NFP goal and PoA and CIP targets.

LANSA research has been referenced in the past three years of the CIP monitoring reports. In the Monitoring Report 2015 and 2016 LANSA Policy Brief on **The other Asian Enigma: Explaining the rapid reduction of undernutrition in Bangladesh** by D. Headey (2015) is directly referenced in section 3 on progress towards NFP goal and outcomes, while discussing trends in child undernutrition.

The Brief is based on the IFPRI-led LANSA study: 'Agricultural and other determinants of child undernutrition in Bangladesh'. The study using Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data, looks at the contribution of different drivers and sectoral actions to Bangladesh's success in reducing child undernutrition.

The study finds that economic growth and expansion in education (especially for girls) are the two biggest drivers of nutritional change, followed by roughly equal contributions from sanitation, health care, and family planning. The study suggests that continued improvements in child growth can come from: further investment in education (for boys and girls); major progress in access to improved health services (which is still very limited); continued broad based economic growth; dietary diversification, which, in particular, remains very low in Bangladesh, and should be a primary intermediate objective for improving maternal and child nutrition outcomes; and expanded and enhanced nutrition programmes to improve infant and young child care and feeding practices, which still remain well below the optimum.

> The CIP monitoring reports showcase the determinants of child under nutrition as important evidences from the study:
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> "*Recent analyses[16] show strong associations between household assets, large gains in parental education and child growth outcomes, notably stunting reduction. The two main drivers of change are rapid asset accumulation and large gains in parental education. Other factors likely to have influenced child nutrition include improved access to antenatal and neonatal health services, large improvements in access to toilets, piped water, and demographic change in the form of reduced fertility rates and longer birth intervals. Additionally, pro-poor multi sectoral policies that have successfully addressed many — but not all — of the multiple constraints on child growth could be responsible for the progress.*
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> *[16]LANSA (2015). The other Asian Enigma: Explaining the rapid reduction of undernutrition in Bangladesh.*"
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> **CIP Monitoring report 2015, Page 11**

A second LANSA research product was also cited in the Monitoring Reports for 2016 and 2017. **Agriculture and Nutrition in Bangladesh: Mapping Evidence to Pathways** by Yosef, S. *et al* (2015) is mentioned twice in the 2016 report and quoted once in the 2017 report (Bangla version). In the 2016 report, it is cited in Section 4 on Availability: progress towards CIP and NFP PoA outputs, under 4.1.2: Policy developments/programmes underway and needs for further action and again in Section 6. Utilization: progress towards CIP and NFP PoA outputs, under 6.1. Programme 10: Community based nutrition programmes and services. The 2017 report mentions the study in the same section 6, in Bangla.

The evidence review by Yosef *et al* was done by LANSA at the initial stage of the programme, to examine at the linkages between agricultural policies and nutrition in Bangladesh. The IFPRI-led study assessed the evidence gaps around the pathways from agriculture to nutrition, as well as examined what the evidence says about the nutrition-relevant impacts of agriculture in Bangladesh.
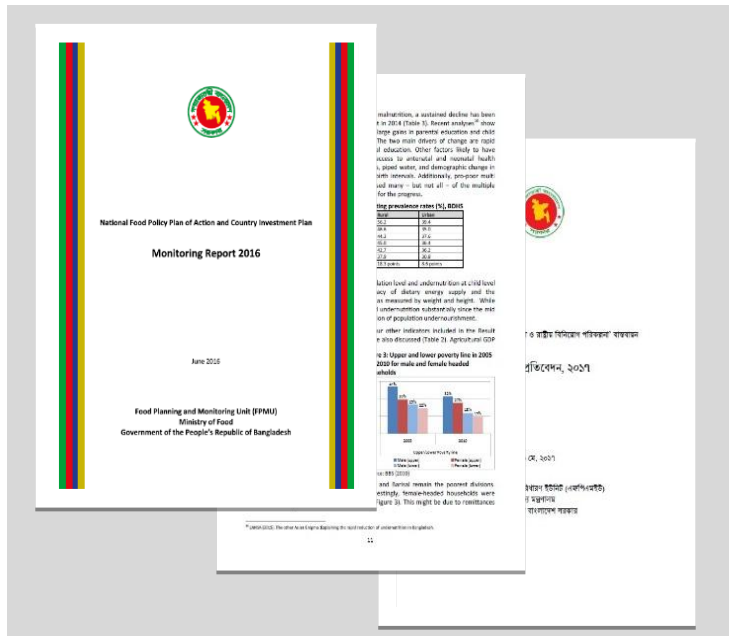
The review revealed gaps in knowledge in all of the identified pathways but especially in the areas of agriculture as a source of livelihood, specifically around how farming households use their agricultural income, and the ways in which the status of women in agriculture affects households' expenditure on food, health, and education, internal allocation of resources, child care practices, and women's own health.

> The monitoring reports of 2016 and 2017 refer to the six pathways identified in the study:
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> "*Gender roles in agriculture: gaps identified for nutrition pathways*
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> *Research can help identify gaps and substantiate the links between agriculture and nutrition in specific settings, particularly with regard to the role of women. A review by LANSA161 identified six agriculture and nutrition pathways which included: (1) agriculture as a source of food; (2) agriculture as a source of income; (3) agriculture policy and food prices; (4) women's decision making power; (5) women's employment and child care; and (6) women's energy expenditure and agriculture-related diseases. Knowledge gaps were revealed in the area of agriculture as a source of livelihoods and women's role as intermediaries between agriculture and good nutrition within the household. Large research gaps pointed to how farming households use their agricultural income, and the ways in which the status of women in agriculture affects households' expenditure on food, health, education, internal allocation of resources, child care practices, and women's own health. It also noted that research rarely measures dietary diversity and women's empowerment as outcomes that represent a core area linking food, diets, and the whole picture of nutrition.*
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> *[161] Yosef, S. et al (2015). op. cit*"
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> **CIP Monitoring report 2016, Page 92**

Influence of LANSA champion Dr. Lalita Bhattacharjee in the policy sphere

BRAC has a long standing relationship with FAO in Bangladesh. This credibility and connection have enabled us to build a strong working relationship with Dr. Lalita Bhattacharjee, a Senior Nutritionist at FAO Bangladesh who has been involved in supporting the Ministry of Food in monitoring the 'National Food Policy Plan of Action and Country Investment Plan'.

On behalf of FAO, Dr Lalita Bhattacharjee has emerged as a key champion for LANSA and has played an important advocacy role to increase the influence of LANSA research in key policy spaces. She has been actively involved with LANSA since the beginning of the programme with an increasingly prominent role in championing our research. From her early engagement in the initial LANSA workshop held in September 2012 and her role as nutrition expert in the stakeholder mapping interviews and analysis, Dr. Lalita has represented FAO at many LANSA stakeholder events organised by BRAC. She has been an advocate for LANSA at various national/nutritional forums, including as Chair of the Nutrition Working Group (NWG)[1] for Bangladesh for multiple tenures where she invited LANSA researcher Barnali Chakraborty to join the NWG and make a presentation on the Formative Study on Farming Systems for Nutrition. Dr. Lalita was also a champion for the LANSA online discussion on agriculture-nutrition value chain held in April 2017.

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[1] The Nutrition Working Group – Bangladesh is a technical forum to discuss pertinent issues related to nutrition programme and policies in Bangladesh. Members of this group include policymakers, researchers, experts, academicians, practitioners on nutrition representing the government, NGOs, CSOs, bilateral donor agencies and UN agencies. They meet regularly do discuss nutrition initiatives in Bangladesh and their progress. BRAC is a member of

For over four decades, FAO has been strongly collaborating with the government of Bangladesh providing technical assistance in the areas of sustainable agriculture (including crops, livestock & fisheries), natural resources management, forestry, food security among others. Enhancing food security and nutrition is one of FAO's current country priorities (2014-2018). The research priorities of LANSA fits very well into the focus of FAO's work in Bangladesh.

A combination of strong research based evidences and a strong advocate / champion who is also well positioned to influence policy spaces – is crucial to get LANSA into the policy space and that is evident from LANSA's citations in the important policy documents of Bangladesh. It also reflects that policy makers are increasingly aware of what is happening in the field of research on agriculture-nutrition linkages.

The next country investment plan to be adopted soon (2018) focuses on nutrition sensitive food systems and evidences and results generated from LANSA's work would be important inputs to inform policy. FPMU in collaboration with several Ministries and FAO, is in the process of preparing the CIP.

References

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5. Yosef S, Jones AD, Chakraborty B, Gillespie S. Agriculture and Nutrition in Bangladesh: Mapping Evidence to Pathways. *Food & Nutrition Bulletin*. 2015 Dec; 36(4):387-404 (http://lansasouthasia.org/content/agriculture-and-nutrition-bangladesh-mapping-evidence-pathways)